



Date: 18 March 2020

Please be aware that this is a rapidly evolving situation.

Guidance is correct at the time of publication and we have tried to link to resources which should automatically be updated, but please bear in mind this might change daily.

The Londonwide LMCs team are regularly monitoring and reviewing changes and updates, and liaising with NHSEI, health partners and commissioners at all levels. [Our website will be updated daily with covid-19 guidance.](#)

Self-isolation and social distancing

New rules regarding self-isolation came into play on 16 March. [Guidance on self-isolation is here](#) and on [social distancing is here](#).

They are complicated so we recommend you read them fully. In summary, individuals who are symptomatic (cough and/or fever) and live on their own are required to self-isolate for seven days. Symptomatic individuals who live with other people in their household should still self-isolate for seven days (if they feel well on day eight they can return to work), however other household members need to isolate for 14 days from the start of the first person displaying symptoms. There are also individuals who are deemed high risk due to their age, medical condition or pregnancy who have also been advised to start social distancing measures where possible.

These rules apply to both the general population and healthcare professionals. We are aware that this will result in many colleagues needing to self-isolate to protect themselves, patients and vulnerable members of society including their family, and appreciate the significant pressure this will place practices under. This is being discussed nationally as a priority and we are lobbying to support you, with particular focus placed on testing of frontline staff and how to protect those who are deemed at high risk of complications. Where practices are able to, they may wish to consider enabling staff who are high risk to work remotely. Further information on this is covered below.

The primary care guidance for managing suspected cases of Covid-19 has been [summarised here by the BMJ](#) (version 3, updated 17 March). Please also refer to NHSEI's Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) (updated 5 March).

[NHSEI's covid-19 pages for primary care professionals are here.](#)

GP-update have also [provided a helpful summary of the primary care guidance here](#) (updated 18 March).



Requests for sick notes/insurance letters

We recognise that patients are requesting sick notes for covid-19 related symptoms or for self-isolation requirements. We have created a standard template letter for practices including a form for patients to download to use in relation to these requests, which can be downloaded [here](#).

Insurance companies are also requesting doctors' letters for individuals due to travel. This is not NHS work and can be appropriately charged for or refused at this time. You may choose to provide patients with a brief medical summary to be used as evidence. This is at your own discretion but may help you avoid having to respond to a full Subject Access Request. We have also created a standard template in response to these requests, which can be downloaded [here](#).

Accurx has already created the facility for practices to send documents via SMS rather than having patients physically attend the practice to collect letters. [Further information is available here](#).

Personal protective equipment (PPE)

Practices should have received their 'fit-for-purpose' PPE comprising of paper surgical masks, flimsy aprons and gloves for when symptomatic patients present to the practice. There have been concerns raised nationally about the adequacy and quantity of the PPE supplied to general practice. Simon Stevens has attempted to address concerns but it is still being dealt with by our national GPC colleagues in discussions with NHSEI.

If you have not received your PPE kit please email: Coronavirus.SPOC@supplychain.nhs.uk.

Triage/online consultations

Practices should be moving towards triaging all appointments either through telephone or online triage to ensure that symptomatic patients are not attending the surgery. Accurx has provided a template text message to pre-screen all patients who have pre-booked appointments and e-Consult also provides the capability to get everyone to complete online triage prior to booking an appointment if they have access to the internet. We will be trying to get as much information as possible out to practices to support you to do this in the coming days. We are also working with the system to ensure commissioners are increasing their efforts to support practices to do this including solutions for remote working such as providing laptops and dongles.

If you do not presently have an online solution in place, the NHS App and online services can facilitate patient triage. Further information from [NHS Digital for different primary care systems is available here](#).

There is also a relaxation of rules regarding approved online consultation tools and information governance, with a [wider range of tools being acceptable for use such as Skype or WhatsApp with more information here](#). Please be mindful that you are not using your personal mobile number where possible.



CQC inspections

Routine CQC inspections have been suspended, but we will continue to support those practices who are in special measures and/or under enforcement action. Our GP Support team is here to support practices at this time - please contact GPSupport@lmc.org.uk for further advice and support.

[Further information from the CQC regarding their suspension of inspections is here.](#)

Routine reporting/ QOF/ LES/ DES arrangements

The government has announced measures to support practices to focus on Covid-19. NHSEI have confirmed QOF, DES and LES payments should continue at their current levels with the assumption that practices would have continued to perform at the same levels from the beginning of the outbreak. You are no longer required to actively deliver these services. We will be supporting practices across London to ensure that commissioners are honouring this arrangement, so please contact us on mword@lmc.org.uk if this is not the case in your patch. QOF 19/20 is suspended and the intention is that money will continue at current levels for 20/21 and the practicalities are being worked out nationally.

We are also aware that practices are still being asked to comply with routine reporting requirements, for example the CQRS reporting requirements for immunisations and the completion of Workforce Minimum Data Set extractions. These are not urgent and practices should no longer be required to comply with these deadlines. We are working with the system to support practices with this.

Core general practice

Practices should be focusing on their urgent response to covid-19 as well as providing urgent core services as much as possible rather than routine care.

We recognise that practices will have varying capacity to offer services dependent on workforce and absence due to self-isolation and general system pressures. We are looking at helping practices to prioritise their workload over the coming days. We will support those who have to temporarily suspend some services during this pandemic. Further guidance regarding suspension of certain requirements on GP practices is expected nationally.



Standard patient texts, telephone messages and website notices

Practices are encouraged to update their telephone messages and websites with the latest information if they haven't already done so. There is some suggested wording below which practices may find useful:

Telephone message:

"Please do not book a GP appointment or attend your GP practice if you have symptoms associated with coronavirus including a new continuous cough and a high temperature. You are advised to stay at home for seven days.

If your symptoms are serious, or get worse, NHS 111 has an online coronavirus service that can tell you if you need further medical help and advise you what to do.

Only call 111 direct if you cannot go online, or are advised to do so by the online service. For the latest coronavirus advice please visit www.nhs.uk/coronavirus."

SMS message:

"For the latest coronavirus advice please visit www.nhs.uk/coronavirus.

Coronavirus advice: if you have a new continuous cough and/or a high temperature, please stay at home for seven days. Do not go to a GP surgery, pharmacy or hospital. If your symptoms are serious, or get worse, visit the NHS 111 online service."

Website message:

Important information about the coronavirus (COVID-19)

Please do not book a GP appointment or attend your GP practice if you have symptoms associated with coronavirus including a new continuous cough and a high temperature. You are advised to stay at home for seven days.

If you live with other people, they should stay at home for at least 14 days, to avoid spreading the infection outside the home.

After 14 days, anyone you live with who does not have symptoms can return to their normal routine. But, if anyone in your home gets symptoms, they should stay at home for 7 days from the day their symptoms start. Even if it means they are at home for longer than 14 days.



Information:

If you live with someone who is 70 or over, has a long-term health condition, is pregnant or has a weakened immune system, try to find somewhere else for them to stay for 14 days.

If you have to stay at home together, try to keep away from each other as much as possible.

If you still have symptoms after seven days

After seven days, if you no longer have a high temperature you can return to your normal routine. If you still have a high temperature, stay at home until your temperature returns to normal.

If you still have a cough after 7 days, but your temperature is normal, you do not need to continue staying at home. A cough can last for several weeks after the infection has gone.

Urgent advice: Use the NHS 111 online coronavirus service if:

- You feel you cannot cope with your symptoms at home.
- Your condition gets worse.
- Your symptoms do not get better after 7 days.

Only call 111 if you cannot get help online.

Tips for staying at home

It is important to stay at home to stop coronavirus spreading.

Do:

- Try to keep at least 2 metres (3 steps) from other people in your home, particularly people over 70, or those with long-term health conditions.
- Ask friends, family and delivery services to deliver things like food shopping and medicines but leave them outside.
- Sleep alone, if possible.
- Regularly wash your hands with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds.
- Drink plenty of water and take paracetamol to help with your symptoms.

Do not:

- Do not have visitors (ask people to leave deliveries outside).
- Do not leave your home, for example to go for a walk, to school or to public places.

For further information visit: www.nhs.uk/coronavirus